United Nations A/70/627/Add.1

General Assembly

Distr.: General
9 May 2016

Original: English

Seventieth session
Agenda item 138
Joint Inspection Unit

Review of activities and resources devoted to address climate change in the United Nations system organizations

Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly his comments and those of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Review of activities and resources devoted to address climate change in the United Nations system organizations" (see A/70/627).

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Summary

In its report entitled "Review of activities and resources devoted to address climate change in the United Nations system organizations" (see A/70/627), the Joint Inspection Unit examined the climate change activities within and across organizations of the United Nations system, with a view to strengthening system-wide coordination as well as enhancing information-sharing and consideration of climate change issues at the country level.

The present note reflects the views of organizations of the United Nations system on the recommendations provided in the report. The views have been consolidated on the basis of inputs provided by member organizations of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, which welcomed the report and supported some of its conclusions.

I. Introduction

1. In its report entitled "Review of activities and resources devoted to address climate change in the United Nations system organizations" (see A/70/627), the Joint Inspection Unit examined the climate change activities within and across organizations of the United Nations system, with a view to strengthening system-wide coordination, as well as enhancing information sharing and consideration of climate change issues at the country level.

II. General comments

2. Organizations of the United Nations system welcomed the report and viewed it as a valuable assessment of activities on climate change within the United Nations system, which included relevant suggestions for strengthening coordination and implementation.

3. While organizations welcomed the detailed analysis provided in the report, several noted that the comparability of the financial data provided in table 1 and annex III of the report might have been affected by a lack of disaggregated data, since not all organizations have access to disaggregated financial data on resources dedicated to climate change activities.

4. Finally, organizations noted that, in chapter 2, section D of the report, entitled "Other climate-related issues not covered directly by the Convention being addressed by different United Nations system entities", reference should also be made to the work on climate change and human rights by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights by adding a bullet point to paragraph 44 worded as follows: "Understanding the impacts of climate change on human rights and advocating the integration of human rights considerations in climate adaptation and mitigation efforts (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights)."

III. Specific comments on recommendations

Recommendation 1

The executive heads of United Nations system organizations should present to the governing bodies of their organizations a long-term United Nations system-wide climate change strategy responsive to the outcome of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and request its endorsement and the support necessary for its effective implementation, in order to achieve measurable interim results by 2020.

5. Organizations accepted the concept of seeking endorsement from their governing bodies for a "long-term United Nations system-wide climate change strategy", as called for in recommendation 1, and expressed a willingness to participate in its development through existing inter-agency mechanisms. They noted, however, that a process for presenting the strategy recommendation separately, for endorsement, to the governing bodies of each organization would be lengthy and complicated. Furthermore, organizations indicated that there was a lack

of clarity regarding the concept of "measurable interim results" in that context and that the report would have benefited from examples of the kinds of results sought and of the methodologies for measuring results, especially given the uncertainty surrounding the final outcome of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Recommendation 2

The governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations should support and endorse the participation of their respective organizations involved in cross-cutting areas directly or indirectly related to climate change in a system-wide United Nations strategy to combat climate change, in a manner consistent with the outcome of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

6. Organizations generally accepted recommendation 2, noting that it was directed at governing bodies, and recognized that it provided an endorsement of, and mandate for, continued United Nations system-wide collaboration on the issue of combating climate change. The example in paragraph 43 of the report, in which the interface established between the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the International Civil Aviation Organization and the International Maritime Organization with respect to aviation and marine bunker fuels was presented as a model, suggested to organizations that the mandate given to bodies in the United Nations system to work on specific climate change activities should be made more explicit.

7. In addition, organizations noted that recommendations 1 and 2, taken together, underscored the importance of shifting the United Nations system towards implementation of the agreement adopted at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (the Paris Agreement) and of climate solutions on the ground in a manner that is integrated into the broader sustainable development agenda and consistent with United Nations human rights and labour standards. This is a well-founded recommendation in view of the structure of the 2008 Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) framework for action on climate change, which is built around the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change negotiations, not around implementation, and makes for a strong alignment and links between the Sustainable Development Goals/post-2015 development agenda and climate change. This would mean conducting a review of programmatic work and its linkages to climate change, particularly climate resilience, in order to ensure both a do-no-harm approach to development (i.e., one that does not undermine climate resilience) and a search for win-win opportunities within the scope of each organization's mandate.

8. Lastly, organizations suggested that the recommendation could have further strengthened inter-agency coordination if the first sentence were amended slightly to read: "The governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations should support and endorse the participation of, and promote strengthened collaboration among, their respective organizations involved in cross-cutting areas directly or indirectly related to climate change in a system-wide United Nations strategy to combat climate change, in a manner consistent with the outcome of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change."

Recommendation 3

The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations involved in areas with clear cross-linkages with climate change should elaborate and agree upon a common methodology to establish criteria to ensure the traceability of specific funding for climate change adaptation and mitigation, seeking consistency and coherence in the context of the climate change regime methodologies.

9. Organizations appreciated that recommendation 3 arose from an effort to address problems in assigning funding to climate change as distinct from other aspects of sustainable development. Organizations supported that concept in theory, but saw many obstacles to implementation in practice. They noted, for example, that since many United Nations system organizations did not have a built-in capacity for thematic budget reporting, avoiding double-counting presented serious challenges in view of the overlaps between the climate and sustainable development agendas. Organizations also noted that, while environmental concerns were an important driver of action, separating out the full cost was not always feasible and was not necessarily desirable, given the prevailing view that environmental sustainability management is most successful when fully integrated into an organization's activities. Regarding criteria to ensure traceability, organizations noted that no clear conceptual framework currently existed to establish such criteria, which might be difficult, if not impossible, to generate, in view of the overlaps between climate and sustainable development. Even if it were possible, a strong differentiation might not be desirable, given the need to create stronger links between those two agendas, particularly as they have evolved through different intergovernmental processes.

Recommendation 4

Executive heads of the member organizations of CEB, under the leadership of the Secretary-General in his capacity as Chair of CEB, should promote the development of a common information-sharing system for the measurement and monitoring of the United Nations system activities and resources aimed at addressing climate change, by sector and type of funding, so as to ensure the most cost-efficient and effective delivery of activities to tackle climate change.

10. Organizations noted that the recommendation appeared intended to address a problem identified by the Join' Inspection Unit during its review, namely, that not all organizations had climate change as a specific component of the information systems that monitored resources and projects. Introducing such a classification would require system modifications with cost implications, and the report did not indicate whether the availability of such common information-sharing mechanism would result in savings and efficiencies.

Recommendation 5

In the implementation of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) outcome and subsequent General Assembly resolutions 67/213 and 68/210, the United Nations Environment Assembly should formulate a coherent collaborative framework for technology transfer to mobilize the capacities and expert knowledge available in the United Nations system organizations to support and participate in the technical assistance activities at country and regional levels, including in collaboration with the Climate Technology Centre and Network, when relevant.

11. Organizations supported recommendation 5, but indicated that the many uncertainties associated with the realization of such a coherent collaborative framework would need to be clarified, and the advantages identified, before a larger-scale effort was embarked upon.

Recommendation 6

The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations involved in country activities in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework should ensure that their organizations follow the United Nations Development Group guidance on integrating climate change in the Framework and build on existing good practices of engagement with the relevant bodies of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, for climate change assistance at the country and regional level, in close cooperation with the resident coordinators, to enhance and strengthen capacity-building assistance to developing countries through common country assessments/the Framework.

12. Organizations accepted recommendation 6, although some suggested that it might be necessary to revise the United Nations Development Assistance Framework guidance in the light of the outcomes of negotiations of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as well as the findings and recommendations contained in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit. For example, the Unit recommended in paragraph 43 of its report that organizations articulate their mandates on climate change and share them within the United Nations system. It further suggested in the report that the development of a United Nations climate change strategy and a framework for understanding complementarities and links between climate change, human rights, peace and security and sustainable development, which would be a critical input with regard to recommendation 3, would help to ensure that climate change is well integrated into the emerging post-2015 development agenda in implementation at the country level.